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It is believed by many in Boston that a great advance has been made, regardless of which of the plans is accepted by the people. It may be well to give the summary of the legislation recommended by the finance commission to see how closely their recommendations were followed.

"The legislative measures which the commission regards as essential to enable the people of Boston to redeem their government may be summarized as follows:

1. A simplified ballot, with as few names thereon as possible.
2. The abolition of party nominations.
3. A city council consisting of a single small body elected at large.
4. The concentration of executive power and responsibility in the mayor.

5. The administration of the departments by trained experts, or persons with special qualifications for the office.

6. Full publicity secured through a permanent finance commission.

These measures will enable a good mayor and city council to give the citizens a really good administration, will encourage indifferent men to keep a fairly straight course by freeing them from the partisan fetters of the present system, and will deter bad men, if elected, from demoralizing the public service and using the public money for their own advantage.

The task set before the commission was to devise a practical working form of government for the city of Boston; not a charter for some other city; much less a charter good for all cities. It is under no illusion that the changes recommended will of and by themselves secure good government. No municipal charter can be a self-executing instrument of righteousness. If the people want the kind of government they have had during the past few years, no charter revision will prevent it. If, as the commission believes, they desire good government, the plan suggested should enable them to obtain and keep it." HORACE E. FLACK.

Municipal Charter Revision—Kansas City, Mo. Kansas City, Mo., adopted a new charter at the last state election. The good features of the old charter, which was adopted in 1889, were retained, but the difficulties in the way of the practical administration of the city government made it necessary, or at least desirable, to have a new charter. The city was fortunate in that it did not have to resort to the legislature to secure a new charter, for all that was necessary was to elect thirteen freeholders for this purpose. After devoting three months of continuous labor, the board of freeholders submitted the present charter which was adopted by a vote of the people.

The new charter is a substantial reconstruction of the old charter along modern, progressive lines, giving greater power to the city in general, and especially in some important particulars. In submitting the charter, the board of freeholders characterized it as providing for "the transaction of public business with the same promptness, efficiency, and common sense that a citizen would use in conducting his own private business." If this has been accomplished, progress has been made.

The new charter confers greater power on the city for the preservation and protection of health and property. The city is given power to construct and maintain dikes and levees for the prevention of floods and to acquire, maintain, and operate tunnels, tracks, depots, telephone and telegraph lines, bridges and subways. Broader powers of condemnation for public purposes are also given.

The common council is given greater powers, among them the power to regulate, control or prohibit sign boards, bill boards, and structures for advertising purposes. Another very important power conferred is that to regulate the rates to be charged for services of public utilities. The city is also given the power to establish and maintain plants for paving, repaving and repairing streets, and to bid in competition with contractors for such work. The power of the council to subject occupations, corporations, institutions, etc., to license, tax and regulation has been enlarged.

The power of the mayor is also increased by making him a member *ex officio* of all boards. He is also made directly responsible for the management and operation of the fire, water and health departments by placing in his hands the power to appoint, without confirmation of the council, the members of these boards. The reason given for this is that the right of confirmation originally given the council was intended as a check upon bad appointments by the mayor, but that this right has been converted into an actual participation by the council in the appointing power.

A purchasing agent is provided for in the new charter. He is given power, under certain restrictions, to purchase materials and supplies for the several departments, it being the opinion of the framers that this will result in great economy.

A municipal court is created to take the place of the police court and the mayor's court. It will have jurisdiction over grading and condemnation cases in addition to the functions discharged by the police court under the old charter. It has been estimated that three-fourths of the grading cases can be disposed of in the municipal court without appeal,

thereby resulting in a large annual saving to the city in court and legal expenses. The judge of the court must be an attorney of at least five years' experience at the bar.

Provision is made in the charter that no franchise can be granted for a longer period than thirty years without submitting it to a vote of the people. There is also included a provision to the effect that a public utilities commission can be created by ordinance with power to investigate all facts and matters relating to the rates charged by public service corporations and the character of the service rendered. The city has authority to require and enforce the production of books and papers and to compel the attendance of witnesses for the purpose of ascertaining the facts under investigation.

The health board is given greater power and a somewhat novel feature is introduced. No member of the board can be a practising physician, and the members are to serve without compensation. The board is given authority to appoint a medical staff, which also will serve without compensation. This staff, it seems, will act in an advisory capacity, being designated as a "visiting and consulting staff." The board will choose the health commissioner and other officers and is given power to abate all nuisances in addition to the general control over the inspection of meat and milk, the enforcement of pure food laws, regulations concerning contagious or infectious diseases, etc. The board is given power to act immediately and effectively in case of great emergencies which affect or endanger the public health. The framers considered the subject of health one of the most important coming before them and thought that all authority regarding sanitary measures should be centered in this board and that it should be held directly responsible for their enforcement.

Of the new features in the charter, the most important are the provisions creating a civil service commission and providing for the referendum in certain cases. The board of freeholders state that the "referendum is a method of securing the highest degree of self-government." No franchise ordinance can become effective within sixty days and if during this period a petition is signed by twenty per cent of the qualified voters, the ordinance must be submitted to the people for adoption or rejection. The council can submit any franchise ordinance to the people without a petition, but no franchise can be granted for more than thirty years without submission to a vote of the people.

The provision in regard to civil service seems to be very full and complete, an effort being made to devise a system which will be practical, fair, and efficient.

The voters were given an opportunity to vote on an alternative proposition—the recall. The board of freeholders were unwilling to jeopardize the entire charter by incorporating the recall, but considered it of sufficient importance to justify its submission as a separate proposition. It may be mentioned that all boards are made uniform in number and qualifications, each board to consist of three members only.

HORACE E. FLACK.

Public Utilities. A review of the legislation affecting public utilities for the session of 1909 will show plenty of recommendations from the executive officers and plenty of agitation in the legislatures but a dearth of laws enacted. The enactment of the public utility laws of New York and Wisconsin in 1907 was supposed, with good reason to be the beginning of an era of legislation for the control of public service corporations by state commissions. The agitation swept over the country. The laws of New York and Wisconsin were analyzed and discussed by the press and the public in every state. Their results were eagerly watched by an interested people and the success which was achieved by those two states was applauded as the beginning of a better era in the relation of the people to the public service corporations. As expected, this class of legislation occupied the attention of many legislatures. The governors of most of the larger states took occasion in their messages to recommend the enactment of laws following in general in the path of the New York and Wisconsin laws. Bills were introduced in nearly every state whose legislature was in session. The chief activity for such laws was in Connecticut, New Jersey, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Illinois, Missouri, California, Idaho, and Washington. At this time (June 1) it is probable that not a single state will enact a public utilities commission law. Here and there some detached pieces of legislation have been enacted, as in Michigan, where telegraph and telephone companies were made subject to the ad valorem tax and placed under the control of the railroad commission. The legislature of New York again failed with no apparent good reason to carry out the recommendations of Governor Hughes to place telegraph and telephone companies under the commission. The extension of powers of investigation which was desired by the commission also met with defeat. A legislative committee however, was provided to investigate and report on the extension of powers. The trend of legislation in this state, while not hostile to the existing control, was clearly against any extension.

Connecticut considered the report of the special commission appointed